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THE WORLD ACROSS THE STREET.

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THIS ARTICLE CONSISTS OF EXCERPTS FROM TAPED INTERVIEWS WITH TWO GROUPS OF FIVE 14-YEAR-OLD YOUTHS, ONE NEGRO AND ONE WHITE, WHO LIVED IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SAME PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT AND WERE NOT ACQUAINTED WITH EACH OTHER. THE INTERVIEWS FOCUSED ON THE BOYS' EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS. THEN, WITHOUT KNOWING THE IDENTITY OF THE OTHER GROUP, EACH GROUP OF BOYS LISTENED TO RECORDINGS OF THE OTHER'S DISCUSSION AND COMMENTED ON THEIR DIFFERING CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPECTATIONS. AS MEMBERS OF THE DOMINANT SOCIETY, THE WHITE BOYS EXPRESSED GREATER CERTAINTY ABOUT THEIR FUTURES AND THE VALUE OF AN EDUCATION. THE NEGRO YOUTHS WERE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THEIR OWN SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS AND ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF REALIZING THEIR VOCATIONAL GOALS, BUT THEY RESPONDED SYMPATHETICALLY AND SOMEWHAT ADMIRINGLY TO THE OTHER GROUP'S CONFIDENT SELF-PRESENTATIONS. THE WHITE BOYS REACTED TO THE NEGRO YOUTHS' DISCUSSION BY NEGATIVELY STEREOTYPING THEM. THE ARTICLE CONTAINS THE COMMENTS OF THE INTERVIEWERS ON THE DISCUSSIONS AND ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM THE "HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION BULLETIN," VOLUME 11, NUMBER 2, FALL 1966, AND IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLICATIONS OFFICE, LONGFELLOW HALL, APPIAN WAY, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138. (LB)

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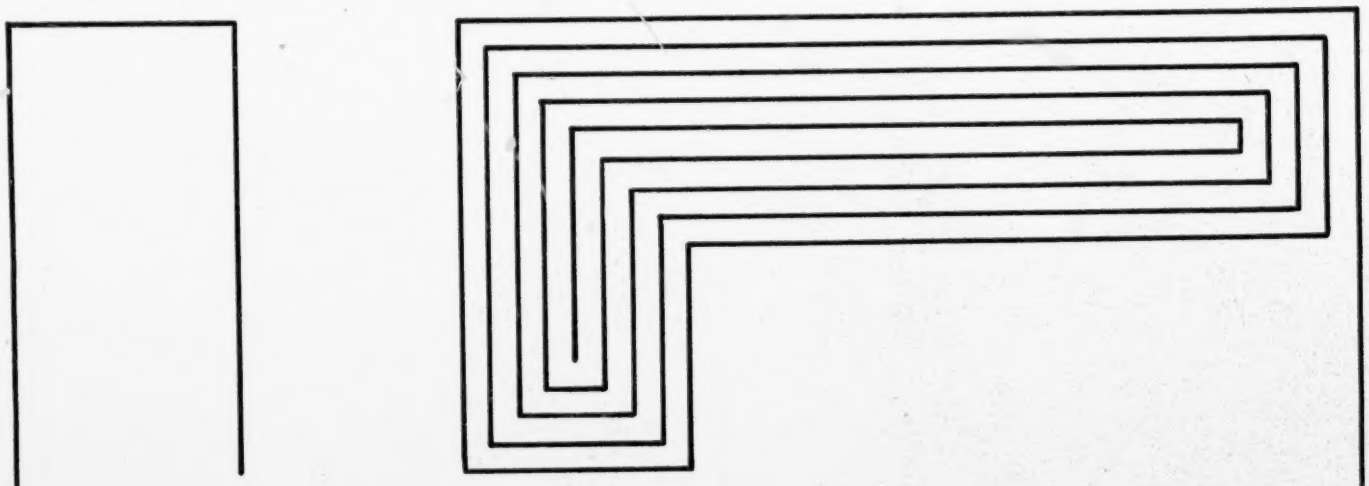
HARVARD R & D CENTER ON EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES



Reprint Number 2

"The World Across the Street"

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"The World Across the Street"

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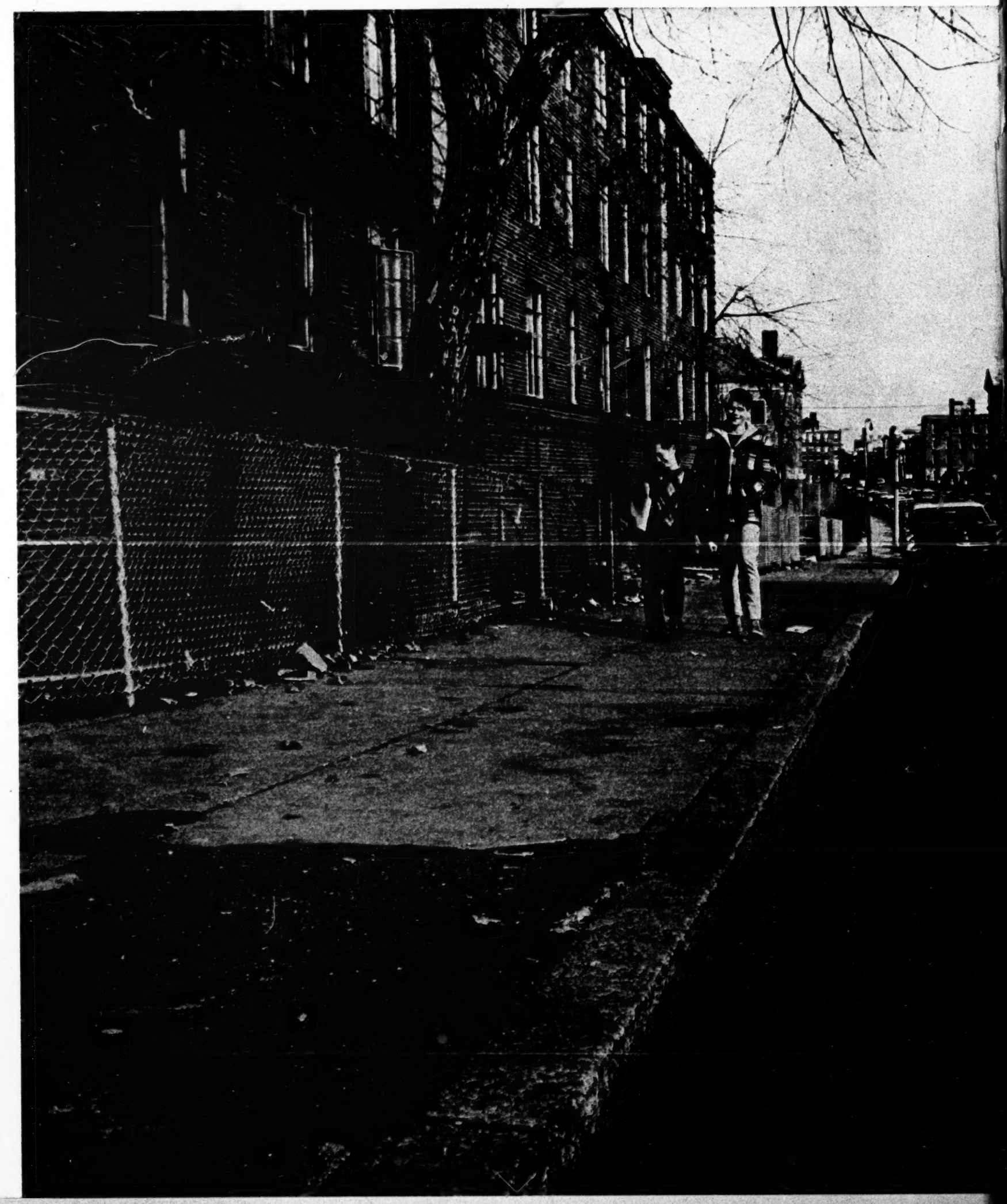
"The World Across the Street"



The following article is drawn from a one-hour radio program produced last spring by WGBH-FM in Boston. It deals with one aspect of HGSE's "Pathways" project, a long-term study of urban Negro adolescents sponsored by the Harvard Center for Research and Development on Educational Differences.

The program was built around interviews by "Pathways" staff member Bernard Bruce with two groups of teen-age boys. The boys all live in the same public housing project in Boston, Mass. They are of the same age and approximate family income level. But they live on opposite sides of Parker Street and the boys in one group are white while those in the other are Negro.

Mr. Bruce talked with the boys in each group about their hopes for the future and their own estimates of their chances of achieving them. Then each group listened to the tape made by their opposite numbers and went on to discuss the other boys' responses. Finally Mr. Bruce and Robert A. Rosenthal, director of the "Pathways" project, comment on what they have observed.

The program was produced for WGBH-FM by Richard Lee.

Announcer: On the following program you will be hearing excerpts from two group interviews with different groups of boys. A comparison of those interviews by the listener is an important starting point for the program:

* * *

Mr. Bruce: To get started, why don't we ask Ernest to tell us what he wants to do and some of the things he'd like to be when he grows up. Why don't you start, Ernest?

Ernest: *Umm, I want to be a carpenter. I don't know what I'd like to do. Haven't made up my mind yet.*

* * *

John: *I'd like to own four factories—one to manufacture shoes, the other, uhh, ladies' dresses, and two others, food. You know, if I start by buying a franchise in one and then with the profits, I could buy in with the others.*

* * *

Announcer: That was John. Ernest and John are boys from Boston. Each was seen with a group of his friends. John's group and Ernest's group have never met. Here is Ernest's group.

Ralph: *My father wants me to go into the Air Force, 'cause he says it's easier to get high up in the ranks. In the Navy, it's big and it's—if I go into the Navy, I'd have to first start out at college, where I can become an officer. I don't think I want to waste all that time, four years of college, unless I really have to. Because I had thought of majoring in biology, but, uhh, that would mean chemistry, and chemistry means German and I don't want to learn German . . . so I don't see any other fields I can go into.*

Dan: *First thing, I'd like to finish school. Then I'd like to go to college to try to be a doctor, 'cause I think they make a great deal of money. Not thinking that I'm going to make it, but, you know. . .*

Mr. Bruce: And, Ralph, what do your parents want you to be?

Ralph: *They want me to enter into an intellectual field, but I don't know whether I see any one that suits me. But I would like to go into the Navy and be an officer, where I could have someone below me so I could tell 'em what to do, so I could feel like I'm doing something, but . . . if not, I don't mind starting at the bottom and working up. Eventually I should get someplace, if anything. . . .*

Mr. Bruce: Mmm. Ernest.

Ernest: *They want me to be a doctor; they want me to go to college, and I'm gonna go.*

Mr. Bruce: What do *you* want to do?

Ernest: *I want to be a carpenter. I don't know what I want to do. Haven't made up my mind yet.*

Ralph: *Well, the only reason I want to go to the Navy is 'cause my father was in there. He wants me to go into the Air Force, because he says it's better. But I think that if he went into the Navy, I should go too, and my son should go on in the Navy to follow his father. I want to be like him and I want my mother to think of me as one of the*

best of all her children, and I want her to be proud of me. That's all I really want to do.

* * *

Dan: *Well, see . . . see, I always go to sleep in class. The teacher, he'll walk up to me, lift up the desk and slam it on my head, and I get mad. So then he tells me to step outside so I step outside, so he takes a billy club* (laughter). *He tries to hit me, so . . . I get mad* (laughter). *And well, so he hit me, I hit him back, and run. They're crazy in there, see. Most of the teachers in there are police officers and stuff, you know.*

Mr. Bruce: Okay. . . . Now Paul, why don't you tell me some things.

Paul: *I like school. The only subject I don't like is geography. Because I don't like the geography teacher, 'cause last year she passed me, this year she flunks me. Like if you don't do what she tell you to do, you do your homework and then she misplaces it. She say you didn't do it, then she call you out your name and all like that there.*

Ernest: *Well, I think a good teacher is a teacher that don't give, ah, don't give the kids about three or four homeworks. Sometime we have, at the most, we have about five homeworks a night.*

Dave: *Well, in the sixth grade I had a teacher and I liked him. He was a good teacher and, you know, he knew how to teach. And if you did something*

wrong, he'd let you slide about four or five times before he really got mad about it. And in the seventh grade I had a teacher, she taught us English and she wouldn't, you know, pound on us with English or pound like that. Sometimes she'll talk at the beginning of the period, like comedy, you know, like that. And then she'd give us our English and we'd be in a mood for it because she, you know, had let us slide.

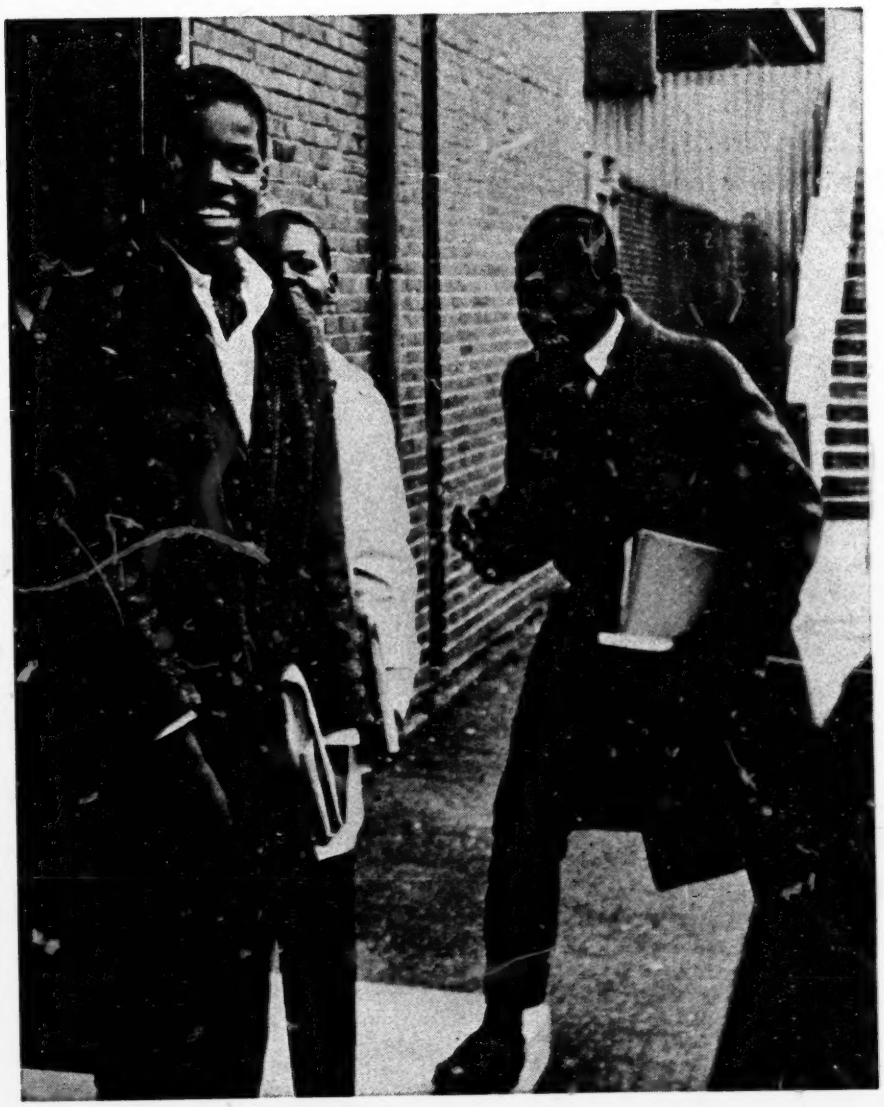
Mr. Bruce: You talked about what you want to do when you get a little older, and I was just wondering what type of jobs you would *not* like to do.

Ralph: *What I'd hate to work at most is a job that you have to, uhh, put on sort of an act, you know, a social act. You have to make yourself appear to be, uhh, of high quality, of high class. That's the type of job I would hate the most.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, what type of job might that be?

Ralph: *Well, if you were an executive, that would be. Like, when you go to a little party and if you don't put on this little act, you just might not be in the next day. Because a lot of people want your job and you got to be up-to-date if you want to keep it. Like, a job with IBM. My sister, she goes to college, she was telling me about what they tell her what they have to do. They have to buy special clothes, you know, buy what the bosses like, and eat what the bosses like to eat, walk how the bosses like to walk. Do everything to keep them right in with their society, and that's what I don't want to do. I want to do what I like. And be myself.*

Mr. Bruce: Okay. Ernest?



Ernest: *Well, I wouldn't want to be a janitor. Because you have to go around and pick up little scraps of paper. And then on Friday nights you have to scrub all the floors. And you'd be doing that all day and it strains your muscles and then when you go to do it next day, your arm feels kind of sore and you don't feel like doing the work any more.*

Announcer: You have been listening to Ernest's group. Now we hear from John's group.

Mr. Bruce: What would you like to do when you grow up?

Bill: *Be a lawyer.*

Mr. Bruce: How do you go about doing that?

Bill: *Go to law school.*

Mr. Bruce: And before law school?

Bill: *Get a good education.*

Mr. Bruce: Do you know anyone who's a lawyer?

Bill: *No, I don't think I do.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, how'd you pick law?

Bill: *Well, because mainly I'd like, uhh, I'd like to help people, I think, and it's a sort of job that, you know, would satisfy me.*

Mr. Bruce: What about you, John?

John: *You mean if, uhh, my factories don't work out?*

Mr. Bruce: That's right.

John: *I'll stick with it until I get one . . . 'cause when you work hard enough for something, you get it.*

Mr. Bruce: While you are working toward developing these factories, what type of work will that be?

John: *Well, I'll probably, if I'm lucky, I'll be managing one, you know, for somebody. Like my boss here was, you know, working for the guy and he ended up owning the place. That's how I plan to do it too.*

* * *

Mr. Bruce: Well, what are the things you don't like about school . . . about teachers or the system, that sort of thing?

Mike: *Well, uhh, you figure you have to go there anyway until you're sixteen, before you can quit. And while you're there, you might as well learn as much as you can. It's going to help you when you get older. . . . Well, they wouldn't be teachers if they weren't good. They have the brains to do it. Most of them are good. Some of them sometimes get a little too hard and some get a little soft.*

Mr. Bruce: Again, I'm just trying to find out what you think a good teacher should be like.

Mike: *Well, they ought to be strict but not too strict. But they ought to keep down on you until you learn your lessons and if you don't learn your lessons, well, they should let you have it. But if you don't have the mentality to do it, then they shouldn't get down on you.*

Bill: *I think a good teacher, like when it's hot, lets you go out and get drinks. Or whenever he's tired, you know, to read somethin' or let everybody get up, walk around, and everything like that.*

Mike: *But the teachers are allowed so much time for learning and if they don't get that in, then the kids, during the exams at the end of the year, aren't gonna know anything about the test. And if you're going out all the time running to water and reading stories, you won't learn anything.*

* * *

Mr. Bruce: Well, a couple of you say that you work after school, and I'd like to know about some of the other activities you have after school.

Bill: *I belong to an, uhh, organization, the United States Naval League Cadets and it's an organization that's very, uhh, worthwhile and it has to do with the United States Navy. And, uhh, by this you profit very much because when you go into the Navy, you get a rating, it helps you and you also have a chance for Annapolis. And I was thinking, maybe as a second choice, maybe I'd live the life, you know, be a Navy man.*

Mr. Bruce: How many nights a week is your cadet program?

Bill: *Only one, but we have homework and it varies. Because we, err, they teach us how to do knots and we go out in shifts. We also have code and seamanship and drill and before too long, we're going to have competition for drill and, uhh, I'm hoping to win a prize.*

* * *

Mr. Bruce: I'd like to ask what type of work you *wouldn't* like to do. Let's start with you, John.

Other: *Wouldn't?*

John: *Farming. When you go out in the field, you know, and you work from morning till practically the night and then you turn in hardly no profit. I mean, it would be different if I owned a farm, you know, and I had people doing that kind of work. But when one farmer owns a farm, say about ten acres, and he sweats on it all day long, and he turns $50 a week from it, it just isn't funny.*

Harry: *I don't know, I wouldn't like to be a construction worker, like on apartment buildings. They'll hire anybody; they'll hire an immigrant just in the country two weeks. So they hire him and he's up in about the 19th floor or somethin', and he just took one false step and he fell and killed himself, 'cause you don't know what you're doin'.—You know, something like construction, digging holes, or something like that.*

* * *

Bill: *There's one thing that threatens all of us, that any teenager or anybody has, and that's this nuclear war and everything. And why do the, uhh, adults have the right to blow up the world that we're going to have to live in? I mean, you know, we're going to have to live in it in the future, why should they blow it up now?*

Harry: *Well, about voting, like they only let a certain age person vote. Say, like a kid, right, and if they have a different opinion, they oughta be allowed to vote 'cause just like you say, with the nuclear war, we're just as much affected as the other people. So why don't we have a chance to vote for who we want?*

Mr. Bruce: Well, at what age do you think, you know, you'd be able to make the judgments?

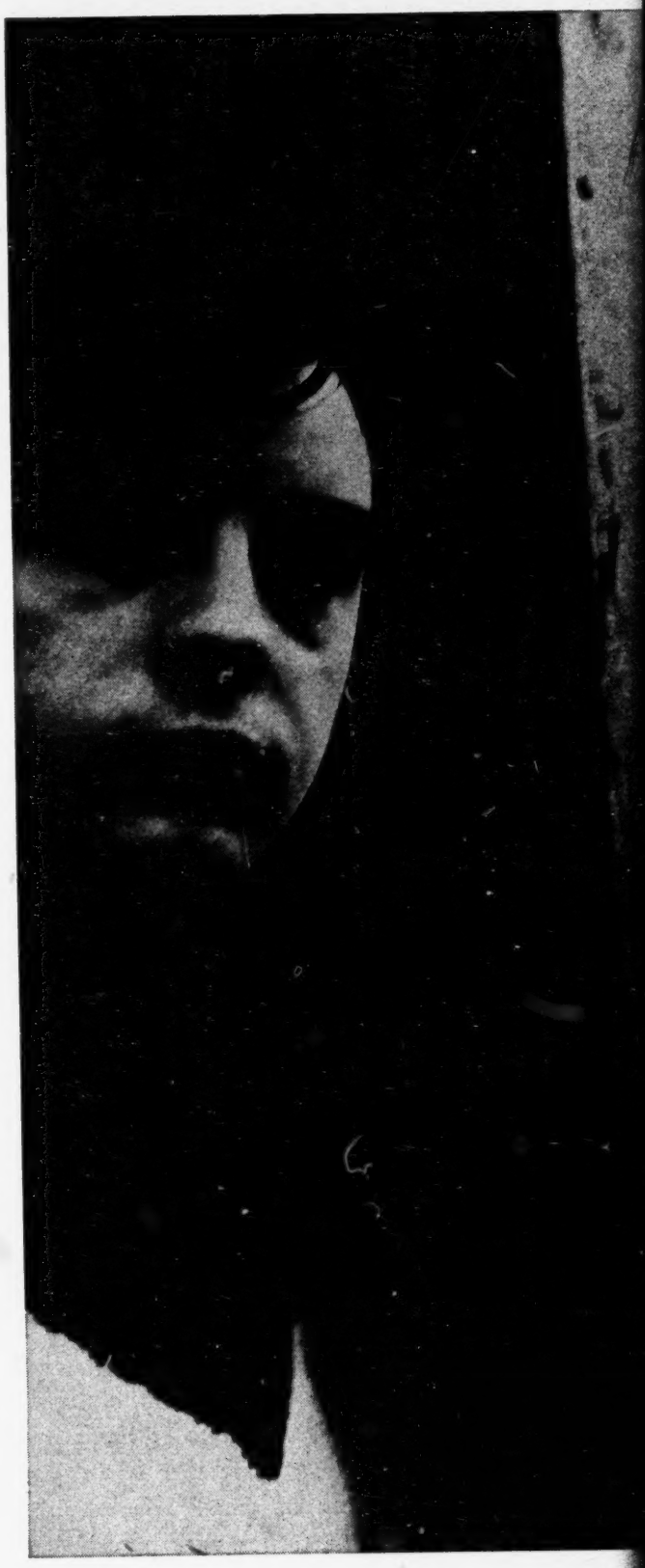
Harry: *Just about the age when—umm, just about the age of reasonment.*

John: *The people are given a right to vote, and that's to control the government which their money pays for, I mean.*

Harry: *But wait, but . . .*

John: *They are the people in the world who are keeping the country going. I mean, 'cause the dollar keeps the world going around. They make the money and they spend the money. I don't think you go out all day and work and depend on your government to keep your job for you.*

Harry: Do you? Do you?



Announcer: You might pause a moment now, to consolidate some of your observations about the ways in which John's group, which you've just heard, differs from Ernest's group, which you heard earlier. . . . We played the tape of John's group for Ernest's group, just as we did for you.

Mr. Bruce: You heard that recording of the other boys. Now I'd like to ask, what do you think these kids are like?. . . . Go ahead, Ralph.

Ralph: *Well, the opinions—they seem to have already made their minds up, about how they would want the world to be run and why they think they should vote. But . . . just what age are they?*

Mr. Bruce: Can anybody guess?

Ernest: *Fifteen.*

Other: *Fifteen or sixteen or seventeen.*

Mr. Bruce: How do they sound to you? What do you think these kids are like?

Ralph: *Well, when I listened to them, I thought they were slightly human, you know* (laughter). *No, they were, they sound like normal boys going to school. But I, I wouldn't know what they told you was 100% their, uhh, philosophy. Because one of them said something about a teacher lettin' you have a drink of water when you're tired, and the other ones objectin' to this. And I see nothin' wrong with havin' a drink of water. That isn't goin' to help you any. Like, if you get thirsty, you're not going to learn any more than if you had your drink, so what's the difference? Five minutes, you might be a little duller, but you will stay alive.*

Mr. Bruce: Ernest?

Ernest: *They sounded like they're in about their last year of high school, to me. Sound as if they had a job or somethin'. And when they say somethin' about Russia or that, they either been readin' about it or gettin' it out of a book because they wouldn't know that theirself, not unless they looked up on it.*

Dave: *Well, they talk as if they know what they're talkin' about and, uhh, like they sit up and read the newspaper every night and they read books on it, you know, to get their education. It would be sort of, you know, err, easier routes of gettin' to college, 'cause they, uhh, know what the world's all about.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, what kind of school do you think they go to?

Dave: *I think they're in the last year of high school.*

Paul: *In a public school . . .*

Mr. Bruce: Go ahead, Paul.

Paul: *They're in a public school. They sound like they go to English, Latin, or Technical* [the Boston high schools with the highest academic reputation].

Dave: *The boy that said he might, uhh, become a lawyer. Well, by the way*

he sounded, he was interested in school —because he'd have to be interested in school, because he'd have to go to college. He'd probably have to take his regular four years of college, and then take a coupla extra courses.

Ralph: *I believe he looks up to a lawyer, but I don't think he's really serious about it, you know. He looks up, like, he thinks it'd probably be great, like maybe a doctor or something high classed. But, I don't think he's gonna really try it, being a lawyer. 'Cause he'll probably give up and say, No, I changed my mind, I think this time I'll be a president of one of these United States, or somethin'. So there won't be too many lawyers comin' out of him.*

Mr. Bruce: Ralph, you said that the boy who wanted to own the factories could possibly do this. Well, do you think, do any of you think, that this could happen to you?

Ralph: *What, own a factory?*

Mr. Bruce: Do the same sort of thing, work for someone long enough?

Ralph: *Well, it depends on who you work for, because some companies you work for for 30 years, they give you a gold watch* (laughter). *Others, you may own shares, bonds, and come up to the executive stage, and move right up into the presidency. But if I was to go work for Jordan Marsh, I might come up to where I could manage a department, but I don't think that I'd go too much further.*

Ernest: *He probably will be able to own a factory, because if you work long enough and the man liked him, and then if the man died, he'd probably will it over to him.*

Mr. Bruce: What do you think about this, Paul? Dave?

Ralph: *I have somethin' to say about it. When he says the man might like him, well, it just so happens that at that factory if there's 30,000 people, like in Gillette, I don't think the man's goin' to get around there to look at seein' your face. So he won't find too many reasons to have affection for you.*

Ernest: *Well, if he's workin' around him a lot, and he's like his secretary to him. . .*

Ralph: *Oh, he's talkin' about a factory worker!*

Ernest: *. . . Yuh, somethin' like a secretary and helper.*

Ralph: *Well, if you would go work at a large factory, you might not even meet your boss, and if he dies, you probably wouldn't even know about it. —Oh, he sounds like he's been workin' in the factory for some time, and he appreciates the salary he's gettin', so I guess he thinks the factory is the place for him.*

Ralph: *Remember that part about this club of cadets and they go off on their little expeditions. They seemed to be intelligent, you know. They spoke as if they, umm, had some knowledge of what they were talkin' about. And this young cadet, he talked about competitive drill—it seems that he is going to become pretty good and have advantage over some normal man who wants to enlist. So I think he's startin' off pretty good in life no matter what he wants to be . . . with his little club, his cadets.*

Mr. Bruce: Paul.

Paul: *I ain't got nothin' to say again.*

Mr. Bruce: David?

Dave: *Well, I think the club's a good club. You know. They can practice their drill and everything. And then when they go to school, you know, they'd know what they doin', and they'd be experienced at it and have an advantage*

over the other boys. And when you do that, it helps you to get your ranks. If you know how to march perfectly, you could become a Sergeant. Then you can train other people to march like that.

Mr. Bruce: How are they different from you?

Dave: *Well, one thing, they're older than me. Two, they have more ambition than me, 'cause I don't want to be a cadet or, uhh, a lawyer and I don't want to be in a club like that. And smarter than me, probably higher grades than me. . . .*

Ernest: *I think our clubs are better than theirs, 'cause they only go to their clubs once a week and we practically go to ours every day, two or three times a week. They only go once a week.*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm. Now let's go back and ask Dave why he doesn't want to be the things that that boy mentioned, a cadet or a lawyer.

Dave: *I don't want to be a lawyer, one, because, uhh, I'd have to go to a college, you know, my four years. Then I'd have to take extra courses, and I think it's too hard for me, and I don't think I could stand the work.*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm. Now let's go back to Ernie about his club versus the other boys' club. Go ahead, Ernie, would you?

Ernest: *Oh, in the clubs we have, we get to do all kinds of things. Some boys like to do one things and other boys like to do the other thing. But in that club, I think all those boys do everything alike, and we don't have to do things we don't want to do.*

Mr. Bruce: What do you think they do in his club?

Ernest: *I don't have any idea.*

Mr. Bruce: Paul?

Paul: *I think in their club, uhh, they'd be havin' drill practice every day when they have their club meetin', yeah. At the clubs we have, we have, you know, this social club. After our meetin's over, we can stay down there and play some ping ping—stuff like that there. They probably have to, at their meetings they probably have to start marchin'.*

Mr. Bruce: Ralph?

Ralph: *Paul is right when he said play ping pong. You see, they're going to be down there playin' ping pong while these boys are learning how to march and preparin' for a career. So when Paul goes up there to fill out an application, they're goin' to say, What can you do? He's goin' to say, I can play ping pong pretty good—I can hit those corners like a pro. They're going to go up there and they're goin' to tell them all the trainin' they've had. And so he's goin' to swab the deck while they're going to tell him how to do it* (laughter).

Mr. Bruce: Well, where do you think these boys live? Go ahead, Paul.

Paul: (Mumbling.) *They probably by the Navy Yard. They probably live in the South.*

Mr. Bruce: David, where do you think they live?

Dave: *I think they live down in Charlestown, down by the Naval Yard.*

Mr. Bruce: Ralph?

Ralph: *Boston. There's hardly . . . well, there's none of those clubs around where I live, so I know they don't live near me, and so they might not go to the same school as I. But they sound like they're Bostonians. They don't sound too much of foreigners. I don't*

think they're New Yorkers or farther up in Maine.

Mr. Bruce. What part of Boston do you think they live in?

Ralph: *Well, I have to agree with some place near water, that one of them can get on a boat.*

Ernest: *I think the boys were all of the same race because they said they were in a club and they do things. . . . And the boys, they like each—they don't exactly like each other, but they're around each other and, you know, they stay with their own kind. Things like that.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, what kind do you think that is?

Ernest: *They could be either one, I don't know.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, what do you think the boys were, Negro or white?

Ernest: *Pardon me?*

Mr. Bruce: Do you think the boys were Negro or white?

Ernest: *I think they were white.*

Mr. Bruce: Ralph?

Ralph: *I haven't any idea. All I know is that I don't think they come around from where I live* (laughter). *Maybe they were Martians* (laughter).

Dave: *Well . . .*

Mr. Bruce: David?

Dave: *I think, uhh, that at least one of them, the one with the deep voice, you know, I think he was a Negro. Because I've heard a lot of, you know, old Negroes talk in deep voices and it sounds like, you know, one that I've heard before.*

Mr. Bruce: The boys that you heard were white and they live across the street in the Mission Hill project.

Dave: *They what!? They lived across the street* (excited whispers)?

Mr. Bruce: Those boys were fourteen. Yes.

Dave: *All of 'em? . . . oh man!!*

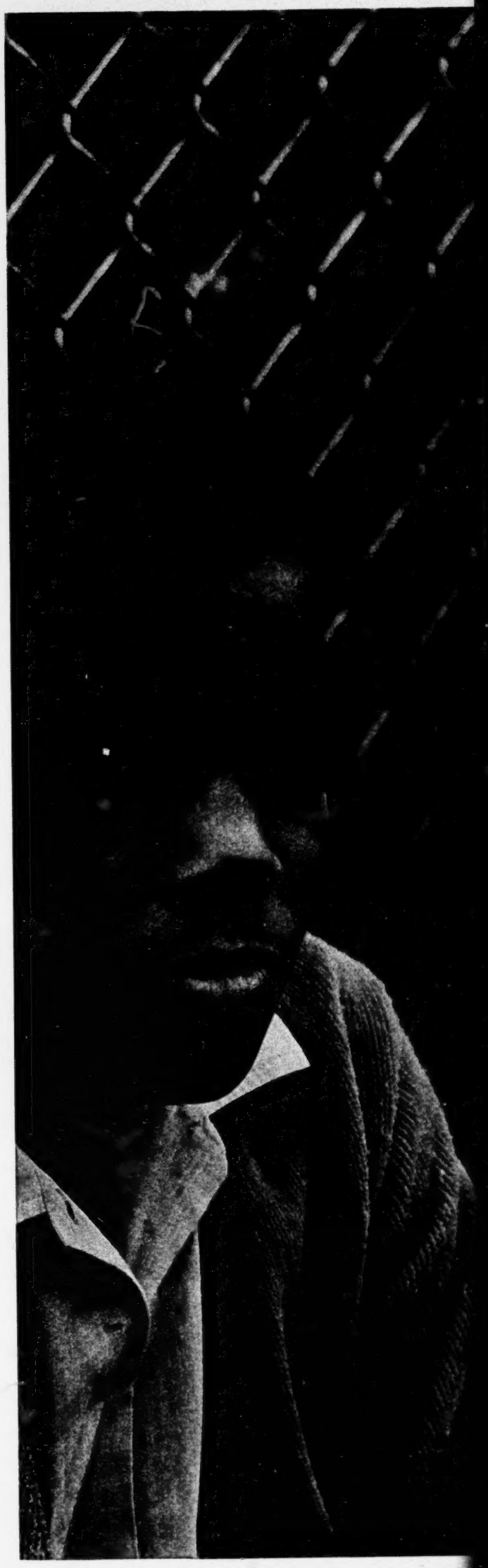
Ralph: *No, but actually, they sound like they go to schools, you know, like ours. But I don't believe that too many of them going to come through with what they predict for their future.*

Mr. Bruce: Why do you feel this way?

Ralph: *Because, you know, when you get on radio, you just say, Well, I'm going to be a policeman when I grow up* (laughter). *And you know, really, after you think about it, you say, No, I changed my mind, guess I'll be a fireman, No, I'll be a dog catcher* (laughter). *In fact, he might just turn out to be a nice little boy behind a counter. . . . But a lawyer he doesn't sound like, he sounds too formal. "I don't think we should get water when we're thirsty" . . . "I think we should learn every day." I, I just don't believe that, especially when he* (laughs) *lives in Mission Hill. As for the lawyer, I'd really like to talk to him and see just what preparations he's made for his career . . . which aren't too many, I don't believe.*

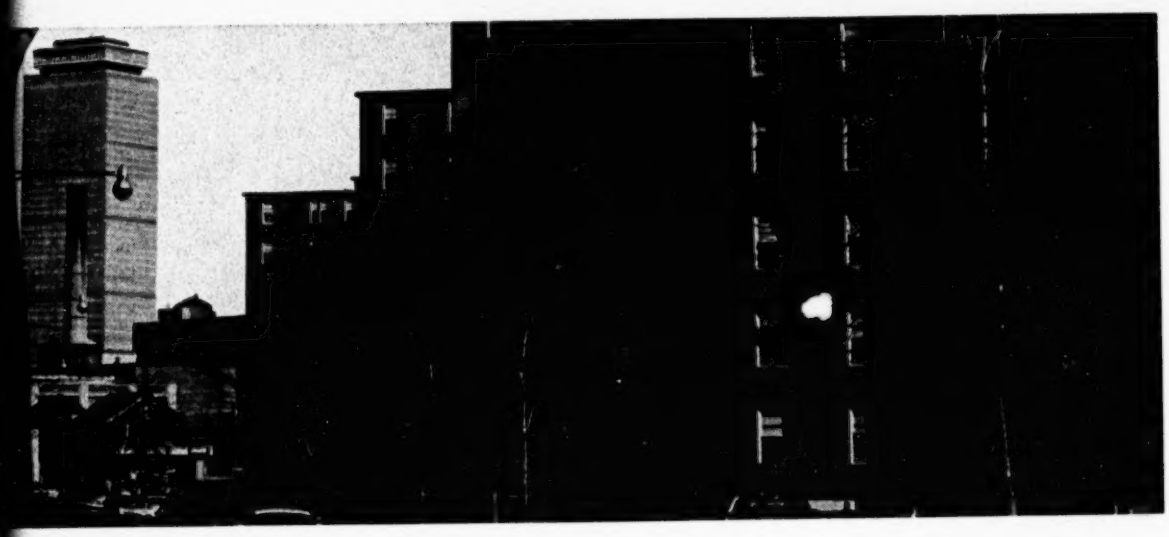
Mr. Bruce: You said something about opposition. What are you talking about?

Ralph: *You know, where we differ—like, they might like such and such a thing, and we might not. You could see just where the difference lies between these two sections of one Project. You know, you could have a comparison—them with us. You could just see where the difference is.*



Announcer: As you have heard, John's group lives in the Mission Hill Housing Project, administered by the Boston Housing Authority. They are all 14 years old and they are all white. Ernest's group lives in the same housing project, all of its members are 14, but they are all Negroes and they live on the other side of Parker Street in the part of the project known as Mission Hill Extension. Since public housing units are assigned by officers of the Housing Authority, these two groups of children live apart by act of government, not by the choice of their parents; and since the statutory requirements for residency in public housing in Boston are the same for Negroes and whites, it can be said with safety that their family backgrounds, with reference to income, are roughly comparable. Yet, they do not know each other, and their views of their own futures and each others' differ widely.

John's group was played the tape recording of Ernest's group, which you heard at the beginning of this program. It was clear that they tacitly understood during the first few minutes that they were hearing a tape of local Negro boys. They reacted to the tape as follows:



Mr. Bruce: What we're going to do is to let you hear a group of boys that were interviewed in the same circumstances as you were. Now, what I want you to do is listen to what they have to say, and then I want you to give me your impressions of what they had to say.

John: *Well, from what I heard, I think four of them would like to have a lot of power in their hands. But they, I don't know how they plan on earning it, 'cause you gotta sweat like a dog to get up there, and I think one of them just wants to be what you call a happy bum.*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm.

John: *He may have the brain of a genius, like a lot of them, but no ambition behind it.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, the one you described as a happy bum, which one would that be?

John: *The one, uhh, who doesn't want to go to college 'cause it might be wastin' his time.*

Bill: *Well, to me they seem, all four of them, immature because they, they wishin' on things that, you know, couldn't quite happen so easy. And like John said, the one who wants to go in the Navy and he wants to make it high so he can be in charge of others. You, uhh, if you want to get anywhere in the Navy really, and if you're going to start without a college education, you'd have to start right from the beginning and dedicate your life to it. Whereas if you were smart and you went and got a college education, then you'd go in as an Ensign and then when you go in, you've got quite a lot, quite a bigger chance of makin' his big idea of an Admiral.*

Mr. Bruce: John?

John: *I disagree with that. He, he's stated his reason for wanting to get up there. It wasn't for the defense of the country or he didn't want to be in charge of some men, you know, strictly so that the Navy discipline could be a little bit lighter on him, or to better himself or anything. The only reason why he wanted to work up there was just to be able to swing a rope around and it's that type who usually turns into a tyrant. . . . Well, from what I know, if you, uhh, just have a little bit of charm, that's all you need. 'Cause if a boss sees that you're tryin' to imitate him, he'll, you know, realize that you're tryin' to work your way in. 'Cause I once tried it myself and I got kicked out on the ear. . . And if you try to act like an aristocrat, you've got to have it right in you, I mean, it's gotta come from the core.*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm. Well, what might this acting like an aristocrat consist of? Give me a few. . .

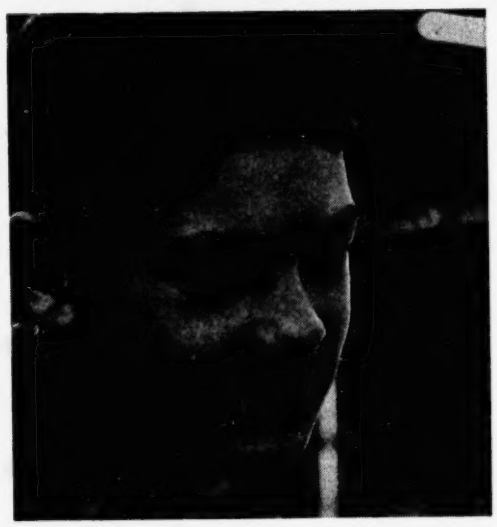
John: *I think mainly bein' polite and, uhh, shoot off a couple of jokes, you know, that make people happy. That's all really a rich man expects of you. But if you walk down the street and say, you know, My yacht's waitin' in the back parlor out there, they just say that you, you're puttin' on a show.*

Bill: *This one that says he was being beaten with a billy club, I think it's mostly, uhh, his imagination. I don't think there's any teacher that, uhh, would quite go to that extent.*

Gerard: *I don't think they're like me, because one kid said if he went to college, it was a waste of time. If he went to college, he'll make twice as much*

money as he would if he quit in high school or got a high school diploma. He'd make twice as much money, learn a lot more, be able to fix a lot more stuff. I want to go to college and learn more and make more money, that sort of thing.

Mike: *In a way they are like us. Because lots of times when you're corrected, in a way you want to rebel against the teacher—but inside, yes. But like, the one on the tape, he rebelled outside, and hit the teacher. Others say,*



Oh, she's mean and what not, when they're alone with the kids, not when she's around. They rebel to themselves and with other kids. But they don't go around hittin' 'em.

Mr. Bruce: Well, do you think they'll make it? Bill.

Bill: *No, I don't think they will—not unless they smarten up and, uhh, put their nose to the grindstone. Because they're not going to get very far with these imaginative ideas of everything coming so easy. 'Cause nothing comes easy these days. You have to try your hardest and do your best.*

John: *And besides, they're probably around, say, thirteen, right? Well, I'm just makin' an estimate from their voices. And if they're thirteen, they'll probably, uhh, meet a bus driver and admire him and go around drivin' for the MTA. I think these are just ideas they pulled out of their heads.*

Mr. Bruce: Well, where do you think they live? Gerard?

Gerard: *The boys that were just on?*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm.

Gerard: *I'd say on Parker Street, Annunciation Road* [streets in the housing project extension], *places like that.*

John: *They probably live in Dorchester, or they could live in Hong Kong for all I know* (giggles). *Hopped on the banana boat and came over here.* (Whispering.)

Mr. Bruce: Okay. Do you think they are Negro or white?

Bill: *Negro.*

Gerard: *I'd say Negro; you can tell by their voice. A lot of them like to take their time in speech, speaking so they can get their words right. But a lot of whites just rush into it so they can get it over with. But the Negroes, they like takin' their time about it. That's the way you can tell most of the time, especially by their, uhh, vocal chords when they go down low.*

Mr. Bruce: I think I forgot one thing, though. We were guessing on the age of the boys and the boys that you heard are 14. And I think I forgot to mention also that these boys do live in Mission Extension.

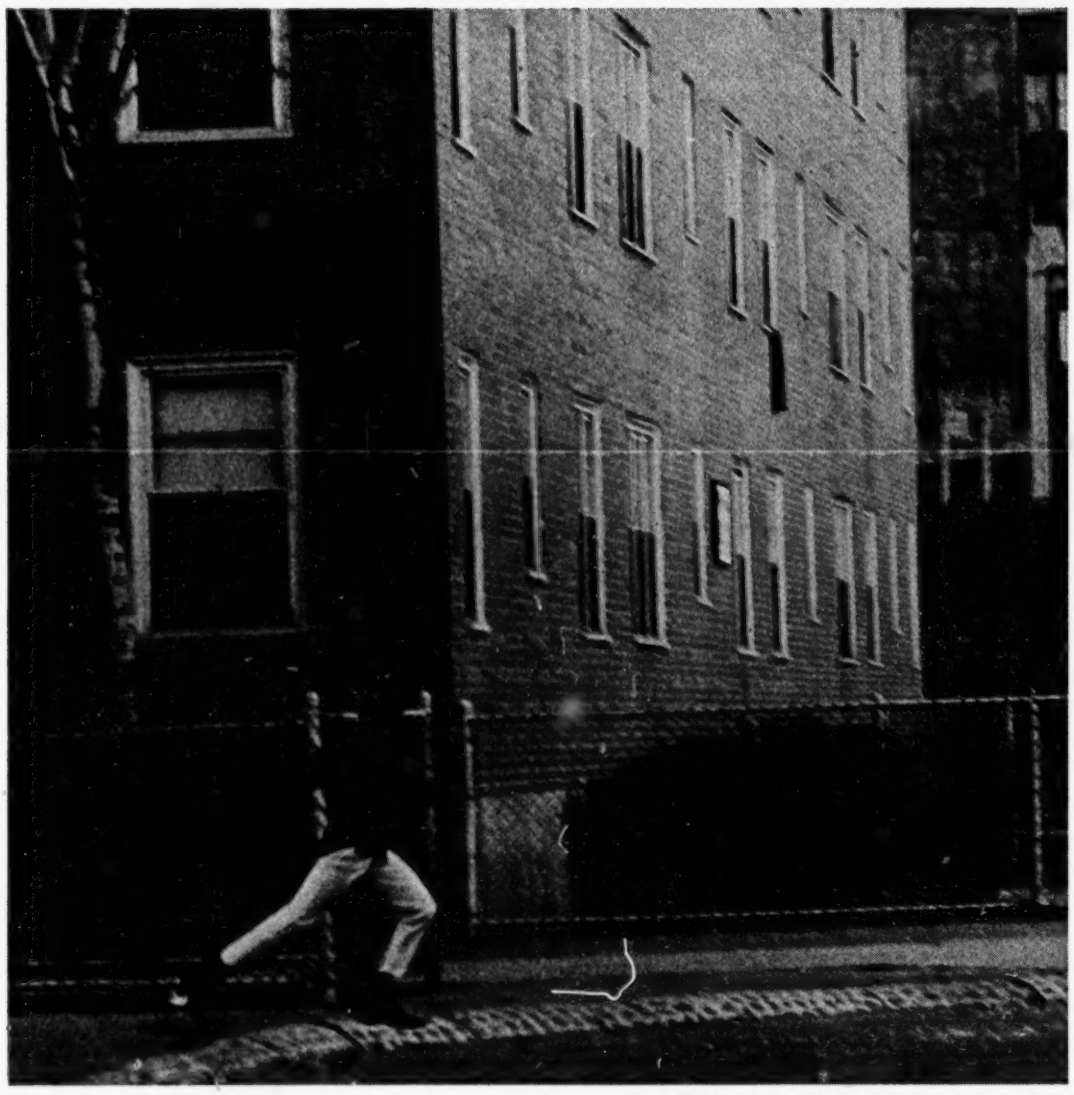
Announcer: Here now is Dr. Robert A. Rosenthal of the Center for Research and Development on Educational Differences, Harvard Graduate School of Education:

Mr. Rosenthal: On the surface the daily lives of these ten boys are much the same as those of any other adolescents. In both groups there are boys who are trying to learn what the world is and what it can hold for them. We heard earlier about Bill, from John's group, and his cadet program. David, from Ernest's group, belongs both to a science club and the Boy Scouts. The boys are also alike in that they are about to face a crucial decision point where everything they decide from then on may determine to a large extent their occupational possibilities, their sources of friendship, and, perhaps, their chances for achieving a meaningful and successful life.

In all these ways our ten young men are very similar. Each morning they walk to school on streets they all know, past stores they all frequent, past people they all recognize. Rain or shine the weather is the same for them on every day of the week. And the road which runs between their houses serves them equally well.

Yet the road is not merely a common thoroughfare, it is one of several boundary lines which place these two groups of boys in two different worlds. For five of them are black and five are white, and that makes all the difference —the difference between the ghetto world and the world at large.

Now, we often confuse ghettos with



slums, visualizing the ghetto as a decrepit neighborhood with refuse on the sidewalks, beaten-looking men sitting apathetically or hatefully on the curbs and stoops. We tend to think of an area somehow physically isolated from the surrounding city, cut off by railroad tracks, factories, by expressways and inner belts.

Yet, we have managed to create ghettos with none of these photographable features. Any part of a city in which are concentrated numbers of persons who have been somehow isolated from and by the dominant groups in their society is a ghetto. The particular ghetto of which we speak was created (perhaps unintentionally), and is perpetuated, by a public housing authority. Although the project is supposed to be one unsegregated administrative unit, you will see in the project's offices at the beginning of each month when rents are due two separate lines, side by side as in the deepest South—a black line and a white line. And outside, the white children play on their side of the project, the Negro children on theirs, with little interchange except for occasional fights.

At this point the listener might well say, *Okay, so the Negroes live mainly on one side of the project and the whites mainly on the other: their similarities still seem greater than their differences.* What are the differences?

To answer this, let's imagine that a person who knew nothing about racial prejudice in America were listening to these discussions without any cues as to the racial make-up of the groups, and that he had to decide which group of boys represented the dominant society and which group showed the effects of isolation and powerlessness. Would he be able to tell?

Let's consider the way a boy sees himself, the way he sees his chances of being what he wants to be.

Which group would this be?

* * *

Dan: *First thing I'd like to finish school. Then I'd like to go to college to try to be a doctor, 'cause I think they make a great deal of money. Not think-*

ing that I'm going to make it, but, you know. . .

Ernest: *I don't know what I'd like to do. Haven't made up my mind yet.*

Paul: *I want to take up business, business courses. If I don't go to English* [High School], *I'll go to Trade and take up machinist.*

Dave: *I don't want to be a lawyer, one, because, uhh, I'd have to go to college. . . and I think it's too hard for me, and I don't think I could stand the work.*

* * *

Mr. Bruce: Mr. Rosenthal has pointed out that the Negro boys had many doubts about their school achievement and their becoming what they wanted to be. We have seen repeatedly how they seem to perceive the other boys as being bright, self-confident, and able to take advantage of their opportunities—in other words, as though John's group really had it made as far as their occupational future is concerned. We have also heard how they perceived themselves, as being somehow out of it and isolated from the paths to achievement and success along which John's group appears to travel.

Let's consider for a moment the atmosphere of the room when each group was listening to the tape of the other. The Negro boys listened, and listened closely, to what was said. They responded sympathetically, accepting the other boys' hopes and desires as though they expected them to be fulfilled. It even seemed as though the Negro boys were a bit cowed by the self-assuredness of the boys they were hearing, because of their sense of knowing who they are, where they are, and where they are going:

* * *

Ernest: *He's got his ambitions and . . . it just may come true some day . . . if he works hard enough at it.*

Paul: *It sounded like he was really serious about it.*

Ralph: *This club of cadets and they go off on their little expeditions. They seemed to be intelligent, you know. They spoke as if they, umm, had some knowledge of what they were talking about. And this young cadet, he talked about competitive drill—it seems that he is going to become pretty good and have advantage over some normal man who wants to enlist. So I think he's startin' out pretty good in life no matter what he wants to be.*

* * *

Although you might not expect it of 14-year-old boys in a place filled with electronic gadgets, the Negro boys were able to recall many of the precise details of what was said.

In contrast to this, the boys in John's group seemed to stop listening, or to tune out, very early in the tape, as though they had heard all they needed to hear in order to discuss what the other boys had said. *[These impressions, like those of the Negro boys, were reinforced by other parts of the taped interviews not included in the broadcast.]* Yet they discussed with great confidence what they felt the boys in Ernest's group had said. Why did they stop listening?

When asked to identify the race of the boys that they were hearing, here is what they said:

* * *

Gerard: *I think Negro, you can tell by their voices. When it comes to voices, a lot of them like to take their time in speech, speaking so they can get their words right. But a lot of whites just rush into it so they can get it over with. But the Negroes, they like takin' their time about it. That's the way you can tell most of the time, especially by*

their, uhh, vocal chords when they go down low. Like when you picture Negroes, you know, you picture 'em down South—you know, living a happy easy life in a shack—and naturally if you're a Southerner, it sorta makes ya drag your accent.

* * *

At a certain point, they didn't hear a group of boys talking but they heard a group of Negroes.

What is the meaning of Negro that made them tune out? "They talk slow" . . . "They have deep voices" . . . "They lie around in the sun" . . . "They lead a happy, easy life." What they have given us is part of an old and still perpetuated stereotype of Negroes.

Now, a stereotype does several things. It prevents you from seeing what is really there, and it also prevents you from hearing what is actually said. In short, it insures its perpetuation by disallowing contradictory evidence.

A striking example of this can be shown by the white boys' reactions to what Ralph said about not going to college and wanting to become a naval officer. Listen carefully to what Ralph said:

* * *

I don't plan to go to Vietnam, but I do plan to go in the Navy. My father wants me to go into the Air Force, 'cause he says it's easier to get high up in the ranks. In the Navy, it's big and it's—if I go into the Navy, I'd have to first start out at college, where I can become an officer. I don't think I want to waste all that time, four years of college, unless I really have to. Because I had thought of majoring in biology, but, uhh, that would mean chemistry, and chemistry means German and I don't want to learn German. . . so I don't see any other fields I can go into. They want me to enter into an intellectual field, but I don't know whether I see any one that suits me. But I would

like to go in the Navy and be an officer, where I could have someone below me so I could tell 'em what to do, so I could feel like I'm doing something, but . . . if not, I don't mind starting at the bottom and working up. Eventually I should get someplace, if anything. . .

* * *

Careful listening to what Ralph said shows a boy who is not at all sure he will make it and who, for whatever bravado, always has in the back of his mind a feeling that he will have to start at the bottom. Yet what do the white boys hear:

* * *

John: *Well, from what I heard, I think four of them would like to have a lot of power in their hands. But they, I don't know how they plan on earning it, 'cause you gotta sweat like a dog to get up there, and I think one of them just wants to be what you call a happy bum.*

Mr. Bruce: Mm hmm.

John: *He may have the brain of a genius, like a lot of them, but no ambition behind it.*

Mr. Bruce: The one you described as a happy bum, which one would that be?

John: *The one, uhh, who doesn't want to go to college 'cause it might be wastin' his time. He say he want to be the Admirals for once just simply so. you know, he can have men doing what he says.*

Bill: *Well, to me they seem, all four of them, immature because they, they wishin' on things that, you know, couldn't quite happen so easy. And like John said, the one who wants to go in the Navy and he wants to make it high so he can, so he can be in charge of others. You, uhh, if you want to get anywhere in the Navy really and if you're going to start without a college education, you'd have to start right from the beginning and dedicate your life to it. Whereas if you were smart and you went and got a college education, then you'd go in as an Ensign and then when you go in, you've got quite a lot, quite a bigger chance of makin' his big idea of an Admiral.*

Mike: *Well, the three guys that want to get high without workin' too hard, well, they're not going to get very far. But the one that wants to be an Admiral, he'll want to get up there, but if he has to, he'll work for it. The others probably won't. The other three will try and get it any old easy way he can —knowin' someone, askin' them if they can, like, sneak in.*

* * *

From this incorrectly heard statement, we then have a generalization about the other boys, a generalization that is part of the stereotype we talked about before: namely, Negroes are lazy, want power without working for it, want to get things the easy way, and so forth. They talk as though the Negro boys really don't know that college is necessary in order to do certain things. But they do know that; the thing that they don't know is whether they themselves can make it through college.

They do know that hard work is necessary, but they don't know if *their* hard work will lead to advancement. Historically they know, and on a more personal level they have seen through their fathers, relatives, and others, Negroes who have not been rewarded for the hard work that they have done.

Mr. Rosenthal: The boy who grows up in the ghetto soon forms and then must live with two distinct and often unrelated conceptions of the world: the world that he lives in and the world as it is for others—the white world.

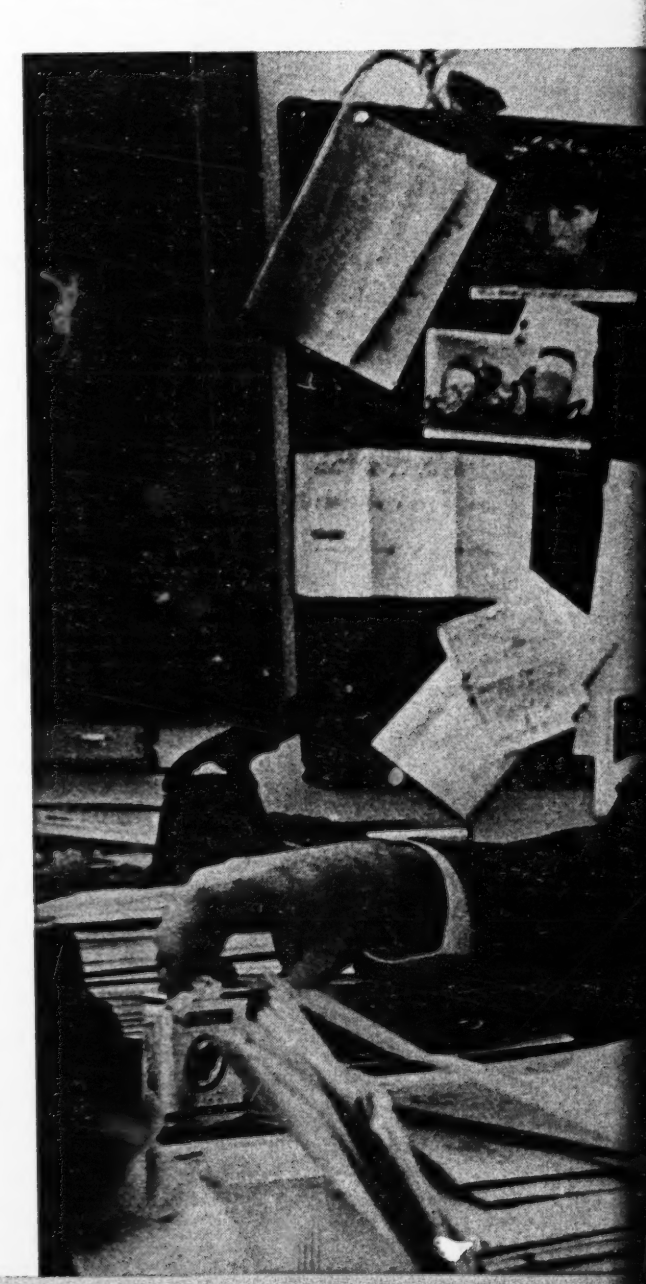
He may have a very good idea of the rules by which the world works for the white man, but his own experience and the experience of those he knows best and trusts most tells him that those rules have not worked in the past and do not work now for him. He is told that a high school education is necessary to get decent work, but recent statistics show that the unemployment rate for Negroes with high school diplomas is virtually the same as it is for Negroes who have dropped out of school.

In a world which is so unpredictable and arbitrary, in a world which seems to operate on two different sets of rules and under two different systems, the only thing you can bank on is your own experience and the experience of people you know. Therefore you tend to see the world in terms of personal experiences which you can believe in since they actually happened to you.

What we can call the personalization of experience permeates the discussion of the Negro boys.

When asked to talk about their school experiences, the white group spoke in very general terms, never challenging the rightness of the system: "Teachers wouldn't be teachers unless they were good" . . . "Teachers should be strict but not too strict" . . . "If you really work, you'll pass and go on to college." But the Negro boys spoke almost entirely of personal relations with individual teachers who may have helped them or hurt them. The school system was portrayed as being arbitrary, unpredictable, and completely alien to them.

When John discussed his ambition of becoming a factory owner, he never doubted that hard work would do it, even if it might take him until he was



Robert A. Rosenthal and Bernard Bruce

85 to own the factory. But when the Negro boys discussed how to achieve factory ownership, the perceived breach between a man's work and the rewards of his work could be seen in their talking as though one would have to be a long-term friend or faithful servant of the factory owner in order to inherit the factory when he died.

The tendency of the Negro boys to rely on personal examples and personal models was strikingly shown when the two groups talked about the men they most admired and wanted most to be like. Four out of the five white boys referred to public figures—among them President Johnson, Governor Volpe, Charles de Gaulle. On the other hand, the five Negro boys without exception chose their fathers, god-fathers, or uncles—men whose success was made credible because the boys could see it up close. It is not enough to know that persons from other ethnic and minority groups have made it, because you see them all as involved in the same white world, and as having become successful under different rules than those which apply to you and under a different system.

For a Negro boy the most powerful and the only really convincing evidence that success is possible is the success of a Negro man. Now, this point is the

hardest for persons who are not Negroes to understand. Persons from other minority groups, not just white groups, will often say: *My family also grew up in a ghetto, we encountered prejudice, but we never felt the business of living under two different systems. How come the Negroes think their situation is so special?*

To answer this, we have to understand in what ways the black ghetto in America is in fact different from any other ghetto that has existed here before. In the case of our other minority groups, an individual could find strength in times of stress from the history of his national or religious group. In trying to find a way out of the ghetto, he could think of heroes, defenses, and solutions which aided his group or his family in similar situations in times past. However, as the psychiatrist Charles Pinderhughes has written:

> The American Negro is the only minority group in the United States without a culture of his own. All other groups have a religion, an internal source of authority and group cohesion, a special language, and traditions, institutions, or any other roots which are traceable to a lengthy group existence, usually in another country. American Negroes have none of these.

We may think of the ghetto, then, as an island separated from the mainland of the dominant culture, a densely populated island with a very few small boats which cross infrequently. You may remember that it was hard for the Negro boys to imagine being in a Naval Cadet Club without living close to it and without being white. As far as public transportation is concerned, it is equally easy for a Negro boy to cross Boston to the docks from Roxbury as it is for a white boy leaving from the same corner.

But people do not go from one place to another merely on the basis of a map of bus routes. Rather, each of us moves on the basis of the psychological maps within us, maps which indicate where we *can* go and what we will find when we get there. The routes which are marked on those maps—the pathways we can choose from—are not necessarily the shortest and fastest ways of reaching a place. A boy in the project, black or white, may walk every day several blocks out of his way in order to avoid being beaten up by his opposite numbers. So, we tend to take the paths that others before us have travelled safely and with confidence to places where others like us have found learning, work, pleasure.

For a Negro boy from the ghetto, the maps he must work with may be like those sketchy charts that 15th Century explorers had to rely on—crudely handdrawn on the basis of hearsay reports from the few who made it back alive, with pathways marked only by broken lines, destinations vaguely outlined—while the white boy's map of the same area is likely to be crisscrossed by subways and expressways, with the same destinations clearly outlined on the map and described to him by grandparents, cousins, friends who live there or who have been there before, persons he feels are like him and whom he can emulate.

The Negro boys whom we interviewed know about this difference between the maps they have and the maps others have, but they may mistake the white boy's possession of an AAA map for his being a better explorer than they are.

On the other hand, the white boys don't know about this difference in maps. Thus, when they see a Negro boy climbing over a fence, they are more likely to think he's looking for a shortcut, seeking the easy way across town, than they are ever to wonder why the fence is there, who put it up, or to ask themselves whether the Negro boy really prefers to climb fences, to tear his clothing, and to bruise his hands.

Duplicate copies of the hour-long tape recording are available at cost, approximately $11.50 plus postage, from WGBH-FM, 125 Western Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02134.

Photographs by Patricia L. Hollander